

NATAŠA MARJANOVIĆ

Музиколошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности, Београд  
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natasamarjanovic4@gmail.com

## SERBIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN CHORAL CHURCH MUSIC OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY\*

**ABSTRACT:** In this study I am concerned with Russian and Serbian choral church music. Two Slavic traditions of church singing, both with the Byzantine roots, initially developed as monodies; over the centuries they acquired polyphonic attire – the former since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the latter only since the 1830s.

In the nineteenth century, at a time when polyphonic singing was just entering the liturgical practice of the Serbian Church, Russian choral music already had a rich, two centuries-long history and it was entering a new stage of development. Therefore, in this study, my analytical approach is primarily directed towards two different fields of church and artistic creativity, dependent on different cultural and historical terms and conditions. I have attempted to overview these two different dynamics of development by explaining certain aspects of the treatment of monodic church chant in Russian and Serbian choral compositions of the nineteenth century. I have also tried to raise questions about certain relationships and the points of direct contacts between these two traditions.

**KEY WORDS:** choral church music, chant, Russian and Serbian tradition, relations, influences.

An overview of the exceptional wealth of musical material, as well as selected musicological, analytical and theoretical literature on Russian choral church music of the nineteenth century, paints a picture of a widely ramified network of different approaches to church music composition during this period. In essence, it is possible to observe several key trends in this dynamic developmental phase: 1) domination of the free, authorial approach to church music composition, 2) choral arrangements of the Kievan, *Greek*, *Bulgarian* and *pridvorny* chants, 3) an increased interest in the ancient, *znamenny* chant as a basis for Russian choral composition. This line of development is principally

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associated with the composers of the so-called “German–Petersburg” and the new “Moscow” period (GARDNER 1978). However, one observes a lot of variety within the aforementioned basic stylistic directions that appeared simultaneously, chronologically intertwined, and many authors gave creative contributions to different stylistic directions.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century Russian choral music was composed freely, without reliance on national ecclesiastical chant, which made it alien to the original character of Russian liturgical music. Creative freedom and expansion of expression reflected in the genre of spiritual concert in the past, inspired composers to create separate liturgical songs as free compositions. Such a creative course, predominantly developed under German influence, was taken by the composers of the “Petersburg school”, whose main exponent was Aleksei L’vov, while his followers included Gavriil I. Lomakin, Mihail P. Strokin, Pavel M. Vorotnikov, Nikolai I. Bakhmetev and Vasiliĭ I. Vinogradov.

Even during this period of dominance of freely composed choral church music, the necessity to preserve the prosody of the Church Slavonic text in spiritual compositions was already evident. A. L’vov wrote in great detail on that issue in his theoretical treatise “On free and asymmetrical rhythms” (L’VOV 1876). As a composer, L’vov gave primacy to the expressive language of German harmony in a majority of his spiritual compositions, but the rhythm was subordinated to the prosodic pace of liturgical texts.

The composers who followed the aforementioned stylistic direction mostly wrote separate fixed songs from the liturgy and the All-night vigil, or holiday hymns. The harmony of Protestant chorales and musical dramaturgy of German Romanticism have been identified as the main features of the German–Petersburg style.

Example 1. Gavriil I. Lomakin, *Въ память вѣчную* (Communion Hymn), т. 1–8

С  
А  
Б

В па - мять веч - ну.ю бу - дет пра - вед.ник

В па - мять веч - ну.ю бу - дет пра - вед.ник от

В па - мять

от слу.ха зла не у.бо и - тся, в па - мять веч - ну.ю

слу - ха зла не у.бо и - тся, в па - мять веч - ну.ю

Simultaneously with the increasing importance of freely composed works, already in the early nineteenth century one observes an interest among Russian composers towards the revival of the native chanting style and the original liturgical chants. Aiming to preserve the liturgical text, composers were increasingly opting for the harmonization of “constitutional” i.e. canonically prescribed church melodies,<sup>1</sup> instead of imitative polyphony, frequently employed in the earlier period. Some of the first composers who treated church chants in such way were Dmitrii S. Bortnianskiĭ and Pëtr I. Turchaninov, followed by the representatives of the “Petersburg school”, in particular A. L’vov, Leonid D. Malashkin, G. Lomakin and N. Bakhmetev. The simplified variants of Kievan, Greek and Bulgarian chants, suitable for simple harmonic arrangements, were used for harmonization.<sup>2</sup> The chant was usually preserved in the highest part (or in the tenor part, while the highest part would accompany the chant in parallel thirds or sixths), while the other parts were providing simple harmonic accompaniment.

Example 2. A. L’vov, *Достойно есть* (*It is Truly Meet*), Russian *Greek* chant, bars 1–3

The image displays a musical score for three systems of a Russian Greek chant. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The lyrics are in Russian: "До-стой-но есть я-ко во-ис-ти-ну, бла-жен-ти Ты Бо-го-ро-ди-цу, при-сно-бла-жен-ну-ю и пре-не-по-роч-ну-ю и Ма-терь Бо-га на-ше-го, Чест-ней-шу-ю Хе-ру-вим-и слав-но-ше-щу-ю". The music is in a major key with a 2/4 time signature. The vocal line is characterized by a simple, stepwise melodic contour, typical of the "constitutional" style mentioned in the text. The piano accompaniment provides a simple harmonic support, often using parallel motion.

<sup>1</sup> The term “constitutional” singing, “constitutional” melody refers to the church singing that strictly obeys melodic formulae and the system of canonic, traditional, historical Russian chants (the *znamenny*, *Kievan*, *Greek* and *Bulgarian*).

<sup>2</sup> In the Russian manuscripts with linear square notation that have been preserved to this day, aside from the Kievan chant, the *Greek*, *Bulgarian* and *Serbian rospev* were separately marked. These chants emerged in the seventeenth century as a fruit of collaboration between the monasteries and monks from Ukraine on the one hand and the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian monks from Mount Athos on the other hand. Compare ПЕТРОВИЧ 1992: 17–24.

With the establishment of the so-called *pridvorny chant* (a specific mixture of the Kievan, *Greek* and *znamenny* chants), there was also a tendency towards unification of church singing throughout the entire Russia, following the example of the Court's singing chapel in St. Petersburg. A. L'vov supervised the recording and editing of the entire liturgical cycle of songs for four-part choir and compiled the *Obikhod notnovo tserkovnovo peniya* [The Common book of musical church singing], as sung at the Imperial Court. The entire content of the *Obikhod* soon entered the liturgical practice of Russian Church, in spite of the stylistic profile of its choral setting which was based on the harmony of German Protestant chorales. The *Obikhod* also contained freely composed songs and loosely recorded constitutional songs. Moreover, the chants were sometimes modified in order to achieve harmonic progressions that were in accordance with the rules of Western music theory.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the metropolitan of Moscow Filaret, fearful of the widespread acceptance of foreign, secular influences, pointed to the discrepancy between the Petersburg *pridvorny Obikhod* and the authentic Russian tradition of liturgical singing. Several authors pointed to the necessity to return to the ancient Russian tradition and to study (both in theory and practice) the musical nature of *znamenny* chant and other constitutional chants (*Kievan, Greek, Bulgarian*). The leading initiator of a return to the ancient Russian liturgical and musical heritage was Prince Vladimir F. Odoevskii with a circle of like-minded supporters, among them Dmitrii V. Razumovskii, Vladimir V. Stasov and Stepan V. Smolenskii.

More than anything, the idea of a return to the ancient chants implied the change of tonal system. By means of analyzing selected compositions, it was observed that the basis of the harmonic setting of choral compositions was found in the very profile of a church melody, and not in the rules of Western harmony, as it had been the case in the previous period (GULIANICKAIA 1995). The crucial practical turnover towards that goal was accomplished by the members of the "Moscow school", represented by composers such as Miliū A. Balakirev, Nikolaï Rimskiï-Korsakov, Aleksandr D. Kastalskiï, Pavel G. Chesnokov, Dmitrii V. Alemanov, Nikolaï I. Kompaneïskiï, Pëtr I. Chaïkovskiï, Aleksandr T. Grechaninov, Mikhail M. Ipolitov-Ivanov, Vasilii S. Kalinikov and Sergeï V. Rakhmaninov. In this period, the variants of old chants (*znamenny, demestvenny, Kievan*) were chosen as foundations for choral compositions, and an important departure from the mannerisms of the German–Petersburg style was achieved by some profound changes musical means: modal harmony supported the melodic basis more appropriately and eliminated the need for modifications of the original church melody for the sake of harmonization – hence the "constitutional" melody was preserved without any changes; the strict four-part texture of the Petersburg school was replaced with frequent

voice-doubling, three-part textures and even an unison that would sometimes flourish into chords; the omission of an interval of third, i.e. the “empty” open fifth was allowed; in certain circumstances, parallel fifths were also permitted; the auxiliary chords (trichords, block chords) were often used; the chant no longer had to be in the highest part – it was frequently found in inner parts or in the bass part, accompanied with thirds and sixths; the setting of a chant was considered an “interpretation” rather than a “harmonization”; the wholeness of the text, meter and punctuation was aimed for; finally, the repetition of syllables that had frequently occurred in earlier free compositions, was now avoided (GARDNER 1978: 500).

Example 3. Pavel G. Chesnokov, *Хвалите имя Господне (Praise the Name of Lord)*, Op. 11 no. 5, bars 1–4

Знаменного распева. П. Г. ЧЕШНОКОВА  
Op. 11 № 5.

Бодро  $\text{♩} = 92$

Хва-ли-те и-мя Гос-по- - - дне. Ал-ли-лу-и-я.

Хва-ли-те ра-би Го- спо-да. Ал-ли-лу-и-я.

During this period, the increase of artistic value of compositions based on ancient chants also reduced the dichotomy between freely composed works and simple harmonizations of church melodies. The most striking example of a new creative approach to church chants is Sergeï Rakhmaninov’s *All-Night Vigil*. According to numerous critics, Rakhmaninov’s *Vigil* presents the most complex reworking of ancient Russian church melodies. The composer demonstrates an exceptional mastery in preserving all characteristics of the *znamenny*, *Greek* and *Kievan* chants, as seen in the individual numbers of the *Vigil* with their complex polyphony of vivid soloist and choral parts. This work marked the beginning of a new stage of Russian choral art and opened an issue of the relationship between liturgical and non-liturgical sacred music.



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In Serbian liturgical practice, multipart singing has only been present since the 1830s, and it was developed within a much more modest context (as compared to the Russian one). An impulse to introduce multipart choral singing into church originated from the experiences of Serbian bourgeoisie who lived at the territories of the Habsburg monarchy and who were well acquainted with the musical life of major cities such as Vienna, Trieste and Pest, but also with the practice of multipart singing in Russian church; therefore, they desired richer musical experiences in Serbian churches too (PETROVIĆ 1982). The first attempts at multipart singing were found at the area that belonged to the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, i.e. in the towns of Sremski Karlovci (1834), Timisoara (1836), Pančevo, Novi Sad, Pest, Arad (1838), Kotor (1839), as well as Trieste, Vienna, Petrinja, Karlovac, Pakrac and Zemun.

Due to the direct contacts of certain individuals with Russian music practice, individual works from the entire corpus of Russian choral church music entered the repertoire of the first Serbian choirs. Upon his return from Russia Pavle Radivojević, the first conductor of the Pančevo Serbian Church Choral Society and a teacher of choral singing in Pančevo and Belgrade, brought with him a multitude of Russian scores. The Society would often perform the “Russian liturgy” and the Liturgy by Bortnianskiĭ-Davidov at their Sunday and holiday services (TOMANDL 1938). The works by Bortnianskiĭ, Davidov, Archangelskiĭ, L’vov, Malashkin, Chaikovskiĭ, also formed a substantial part of the choral repertoire that the Society performed in concerts. A particular practice established in Pančevo that has continued to the present day consisted of performances of concert (i.e. non-liturgical) works at the Easter Friday service (the repertoire contained works by Serbian composers, as well as Bortnianskiĭ, Malashkin and Archangelskiĭ).<sup>3</sup>

Another important collection of choral works of Russian church music is preserved at the Library of the Serbian Orthodox Municipality in Trieste. The citizens of Trieste, among them some wealthy merchants as well as those who had family ties with Russia, would obtain individual copies of scores from Petersburg. This musical material that comprised works by Maksim S. Berezovskiĭ, Bortnianskiĭ, Turchaninov, L’vov, Bakhmetev, also represents an important testimony on the work of Giuseppe and Francesco Sinico who wrote liturgical church music for the Serbian church in Trieste, inspired by Russian liturgical songs (see: MIHALEK 1987; PETROVIĆ 1989). Aside from liturgical choral songs written after Russian models, there are examples of liturgies in which the entire numbers by Russian composers, most frequently by Bortnianskiĭ, were simply copied (TOMANDL 1938).

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<sup>3</sup> See: *Вечерње на Велики Петњак по традицији Свјатоусјенског храма у Панчеву*. Прир. мр Вера Царина. Панчево: Панчевачко српско црквено певачко друштво, 2010.

Liturgical songs for the services in Serbian Orthodox churches were also written by other lesser known musicians, both Serbian and foreign, such as Benedikt Randhartinger and Gottfried Preyer in Vienna, Weiss von Barenfells in Petrinja, Aleksandar Morfidis-Nisis in Novi Sad, Nikola Đurković in Pančevo (PETROVIĆ 1982). A majority of these songs were freely composed, without relying upon traditional Serbian church chants. Some known facts on the activities of two composers who made first attempts at harmonizing Serbian church chants also point to some Russian models. The fact that Nikola Đurković took part in the premiere of Francesco Sinico's *Liturgy* in Trieste (1840) points to the possibility that the young Serbian musician was Sinico's disciple, i.e. that he could have received some mediated knowledge on the compositional techniques employed by Russian authors (compare: MIHALEK 1987). An example of borrowing from Russian choral works has been found in the four-part Liturgy by Spiridon Trbojević, a church musician who worked in Timisoara, Karlovac and Zagreb. The manuscript of this work contains numerous harmonizations of Serbian traditional chants, but also a Cherubic Hymn by an unknown Russian author (PETROVIĆ 2002).

Still, a precondition for the acceptance of multi-part singing was strict: the choral setting had to be based on Serbian church chant. This basic requirement was issued by Serbian patriarch Josif Rajačić who, in the mid-nineteenth century, encouraged and supervised the pioneering effort by Kornelije Stanković to write down Serbian church chants and to harmonize them for a four-part choir. As a student of Simon Sechter, Stanković approached this task guided by the rules of Western classical harmony, but he also obeyed the strict instructions to preserve original Serbian chant (BINGULAC 1985). In all of Stanković's harmonizations, the church chant is preserved unchanged in the soprano part, while other voices provide simple homophonic accompaniment.

Example 4. Kornelije Stanković, *Господи воззвахъ* (Stichera on *Lord, I have cried*),  
Tone IV, bars 1–12

Корнелије Станковић  
Српски капел (карловачки)

:Господи воззвахъ:

Го - спо-ди воз - звах к Те - бје, у - сли -

ши - мја, У - сли - ши - мја, Го - спо - ди!

The first composer to follow in Stanković's footsteps, Tihomir Ostojić, retained a similar approach to church chants when creating choral liturgical songs. A philologist by education, professor of literature and church singing at the Serbian Great Gymnasium in Novi Sad, he collected and harmonized Serbian church chants for his students. Just like Stanković, Ostojić kept the chant in the highest part of the choral setting, while the other parts complemented the harmonic design, also outlined in the bass part.

Some important novelties were introduced by Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac. He received musical training in Munich, Rome and Leipzig and was well acquainted with the techniques of Western vocal polyphony and the Protestant chorale; therefore he approached church chants as a basis for rich artistic invention. Having grown up with church music, Mokranjac respected the need to preserve the original church chant and never disturbed its basic features by employing overly complicated compositional means. Many of Mokranjac's arrangements of monodic folk tunes are distinguished by a free use of dynamics and interpretative nuances, as well as introduction of a dialogue between male and female voices, often in polyphonic contexts. The dramaturgy of a liturgical text is musically illustrated with an expanded harmonic and textural setting.



Example 5. Stevan Mokranjac, *Тебе одбюцаюся*  
 (Holy and Great Friday, Stichera Aposticha), bars 21–29

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with four staves. The first system (bars 21-24) shows vocal lines with lyrics in Cyrillic and Latin script, and a bass line. Dynamics include 'p' and 'Solo'. The second system (bars 25-28) continues the vocal and bass lines. The third system (bars 29-32) is marked 'Andante' with a tempo of quarter note = 60, and includes 'Tutti' and 'dim.' markings. The lyrics in the third system are: 'ce, je - to - že EKA - aš COHI - li; se, je - go - ze vna - je sohn - ce'.

A more substantial departure from the church chant is found in the sacred works by Mokranjac's contemporary Josif Marinković who was educated in Prague and Vienna. He wrote works in the spirit of Serbian church music, but often without directly employing church chants or, at least, not in their entirety.

Only in the twentieth century Serbian choral music acquired new freedoms in the treatment of church chants. Educated in Budapest, Munich, Leipzig, Vienna, Prague, Oxford, Paris, Serbian composers approached the chants by employing a more advanced harmonic language, sometimes entirely abandoning the spirit of folk melody. Thus the genre of sacred choral composition, bordering on freely written music, distances itself from the liturgical framework and turns into a genre suitable only for concert performances (compare ĐAKOVIĆ 2012).

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The meeting points between Serbian and Russian church music practices in the second half of the nineteenth century can be identified on the side, as individual activities, initiatives and personal contacts – by Kornelije Stanković and Stevan Mokranjac above all else. Aside from the circle of pan-Slavic Viennese intellectuals who embraced German philosopher G. Herder's idea on the importance of preserving folklore tradition and the spirit of folk art, there was another significant influence on Stanković's work on collecting Serbian oral church tradition, that of a Russian priest and a Royal emissary in Vienna, Mihailo Rajevski. It is possible that his ideas on Stanković's fulfillment of the aforementioned task were influenced by the simultaneous activities of the Court Chapel in Petersburg (namely, during that period, Alexei L'vov supervised the harmonization of a vast body of church songs of the entire yearly circle). The fact that, aside from Archpriest Rajevski and Balabin, the Russian representative at the Viennese court, Alexei L'vov also attended Stanković's concerts in Vienna, testifies on the possible exchanges of ideas and other types of influence (compare RAHMANOVA 2006).

The question on the two composers' employment of various compositional devices while writing down and harmonizing chants is also interesting. Gardner justifies the critique of Russian practice by pointing out that Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs alike critiqued the transfer of melodic peculiarities of all eight tones of the Russian *Octoechos* into the major-minor system (GARDNER 1978: 330). The same approach, and the difficulties that Kornelije Stanković ran into whilst attempting to harmonize certain Serbian chants that he had recorded (in particular the melodies of the fifth and the sixth mode), were a consequence of his musical training within the strictures of the Western European system. Nevertheless, the supervision by Patriarch Rajačić and the Karlovac Archpriest Atanasije Popović, who checked the accuracy of Stanković's transcriptions, confirmed that the melodies of Serbian chant did not lose their basic features in a way that was, apparently, found in some of A. L'vov's transcriptions.

With his idea on the return to the ancient chant, Prince Odoevskii, a great Russian cultural activist and an intellectual of a superior artistic taste, helped spread the national ideas among the Slavic people during the nineteenth century.

He was actively interested in Stanković's work and invited the young composer to publish his transcriptions of the Serbian *Oktoechos* in Russia. His activities aimed towards the return of ancient Russian chants also inspired the historiographical, theoretical and musicological research of S. Smolenskiĭ. Whilst studying the connections in the area of church singing among the Orthodox Slavic peoples, in particular the Russians, Bulgarians and Serbs, Smolenskiĭ paid great attention to Stanković's work (compare RAHMANOVA 2006).

Thanks to Kornelije Stanković, Russian musicians got acquainted with Serbian chants, written down for the first time. Thus certain melodies and harmonizations of the Serbian chant were used in several choral works by Russian composers A. Kastalskiĭ and A. Kastorskiĭ (GARDNER 1987; SPONSEL 2006–2007; RAHMANOVA 2007).

There are testimonies on Stanković's attendances of liturgies at the Russian Chapel during his studies in Vienna. Among the preserved manuscripts one finds transcriptions of a Christmas stichera, based on the melody of a Russian chant, with two harmonizations by Stanković. This material presents a unique example of a reworking of a Russian chant by a Serbian musician in the nineteenth century. Aside from linguistic similarities (the Russian redaction of the Church-Slavonic language had been used in the Serbian church since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century), there are musical similarities, mostly in terms of harmonic language, between this Russian liturgical hymn and a large number of Serbian melodies recorded by Stanković. He also used some classical harmonic tools for his interpretations of the melodies of Russian sixth tone. The fact that there exist two versions of his harmonizations of the recorded stichera (in the first version, the melody is harmonized by modulating from A minor to D major, and in the other, from C major to D major) confirms that Stanković understood that there were multiple ways to interpret the latent harmony of Russian chants.

Example 6. Kornelije Stanković, *Слава въ вышнихъ Бою*, Christmas stichera after the Gospel, tone VI, a Russian chant harmonized, the Archive of SASA, Historical collection no. 7888, vol. C (4), p. 22–23.



An interesting topic for further research of Russian-Serbian musical relationship in the nineteenth century, but also in the later period, are the contacts that Stevan Mokranjac established with representatives of the Russian cultural elite. Certainly the composer's concert tours with the Belgrade Singing Society in 1896 that took them to Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow and Kiev are of particular importance. Several excellent reviews of their performances in Petersburg and Moscow press testify to positive reception (see: EVDOKIMOVA 2014). Also the director of the Moscow Sinod Choir, St. Smolenskii, recorded his overwhelmingly positive impressions (RAHMANOVA 2007: 14). Declaring himself as one of Mokranjac's biggest admirers, he spoke most favourably on the Liturgy, in particular praising Mokranjac's full knowledge of the essence of its basic musical contents and liturgical function (MANOJLOVIĆ 1932: 184). From

Smolenskii's letters we learn about Mokranjac's contacts with the renowned Moscow publisher Jurgenson, who accepted a copy of Mokranjac's Liturgy for consideration. The scores of works by Russian composers, preserved at the archive of the Belgrade Singing Society, testify to the importance of Mokranjac's contacts and collaborations for further spreading of Russian sacred music in Serbian musical circles. The year when the Society toured Russia, as well as the remaining few years of the nineteenth century, were marked by a gradual introduction of compositions by Russian authors into the repertoire of the Belgrade Singing Society (the works by Bortnianskii, Davidov, L'vov and Malashkin).

The abundance of testimonies on the specifics of Russian and Serbian choral church music practice and on individual meeting points between these two traditions offer many opportunities for further investigations. This overview of Russian-Serbian relations in the context of choral church music of the nineteenth century, with a brief review of the basic traits of church chants and the ways how they have been translated into the context of multi-part choral singing, presents a basis for an understanding of Russian influences upon Serbian sacred choral music of the twentieth century.

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СРПСКО-РУСКЕ ВЕЗЕ У ХОРСКОЈ ЦРКВЕНОЈ МУЗИЦИ XIX ВЕКА

Резиме

Предмет истраживања у овом раду биле су руска и српска традиција хорске црквене музике у XIX веку, два различита поља црквено-уметничког стваралаштва, са различитим динамикама развоја. Покушали смо да их представимо тумачећи поједине аспекте третмана једногласног црквеног напева у руској, односно српској хорској композицији XIX века. У овом контексту, дат је кратак осврт на стваралаштво композитора руске „петербуршке“ и „московске“ школе, односно преглед главних карактеристика композиционих поступака којима су прибегавали српски композитори у XIX веку.

У српској музиколошкој литератури често се говори о утицајима руске црквене музике на традицију српског хорског појања, иако могућности праћења путева ових утицаја до сада нису прецизно дефинисане. У раду су осветљена питања о појединим директним везама и додирним тачкама између двеју традиција. Међу кључним тачкама истакнуте су активности појединаца, у приватним и професионалним везама са Русијом, дела руских аутора на репертоару српских хорова, као и интересовање руских композитора и историчара црквене музике за традицију српског појања у контексту ширих историјских, културолошких и музиколошких истраживања.

Кључне речи: хорска црквена музика, црквени напев, руска и српска традиција, везе, утицаји.